7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

163 Though the Dyaks marry young, they do not have large families. It is not often that one meets a family of over three or four children, and I have only known of one case where a woman had seven children. The conditions are favourable, one would think, to a rapid increase of population. They have plenty of good plain food, and the climate is healthy. There are none of the principal checks to population mentioned by Malthus among savage nations—starvation, disease, war, infanticide, or immorality. What, then, is the cause of the small number of births? Climate and race may have something to do with it, but I think the main cause of it is the infertility of the women. This is no doubt brought about by the hard work they do, and the heavy loads they often carry. A Dyak woman sometimes spends the whole day in the field, and carries home at night a heavy load, often walking for several miles over hilly paths. In addition to this, she has to pound the rice, a work which strains every muscle of the body. I have often been told by Dyak women that the hardest work they have to do is this rice-pounding. This kind of hard labour begins at an early age, and never ceases until the woman is too old or too weak to work. Need we wonder, then, at the limited number of her children?

462